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Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017



TODAY'S EDITORIAL

Duke Energy needs to keep faith with renewable compromise

CBC Editorial: Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017; Editorial # 8222
The following is the opinion of Capitol Broadcasting Company

Advancing North Carolina's clean energy economy just never seems easy.

When hard-earned compromises are worked out between renewable energy interests and North Carolina's utility monopoly Duke Energy, the deals still must overcome reflexive opposition from powerful luddites in the General Assembly.

Such was the case recently with a [crucial series of reforms](#), worked out over nearly a year of tough negotiations. A cornerstone of the effort was a competitive bidding process for new solar development aimed at increasing competition for the renewables industry.

While renewable energy advocates say the law was designed to level the playing field because of Duke Energy's monopoly, some now complain that Duke is using the rule-making process to increase its advantage.

The law calls for Duke to propose a structure for a competitive bidding process that would be administered by an independent third party selected by the North Carolina Utilities Commission. The independent administration of the bidding process was critical to the compromise.

Now, it seems Duke has recently proposed that it nominate the candidates to act as the independent evaluators picked by the Utilities Commission. While the

independent evaluators would compile a priority list of projects to be awarded bids, Duke would also compile a list. If there were differences, Duke and the evaluator would try to work out their differences, but Duke would ultimately decide the winning projects.

The renewable energy industry says this isn't the spirit of the compromise – just another effort by the energy monopoly to control the process. Duke says its process will be transparent and the bidding will be competitive and fair. Since the energy company is responsible for providing power and operating the energy grid, it argues that it must be able to make the final decision.

During an energy policy conference in Charlotte earlier this week, legislators involved in shepherding the compromise through the General Assembly were concerned it could evaporate and jeopardize the significant potential it offered to the state's economy.

"We don't need lawsuits, we don't need to be fighting each other," said state Rep. John Szoka, R-Cumberland, who played a leading role in forging and promoting the legislation in [comments to the Charlotte Business Journal](#).

It is not an exaggeration, say those involved in the negotiations over the renewable energy legislation, that compromises came over specific words, even commas and periods.

Now is not the time for Duke Energy to seek to reinterpret or revise the deal.

Duke Energy should do what the law requires and the spirit of the compromise dictates, in its proposals to the Utilities Commission, and assure that those charged with overseeing the solar energy project bidding process are truly independent.

After all, no less an authority than the state Constitution warns that "monopolies are contrary to the genius of a free state."

The commission is expected to adopt a final bidding process within the next week. It needs to assure that the bidding process is transparent and fair to all – and sticks to the spirit and letter of the compromise hammered out in the legislature.

There is no reason to allow any more clouds of controversy to dim the opportunities that can emerge from a strong clean energy economy.



Opinion Roundup

Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2017 -- A roundup of opinion, commentary and analysis on the status of the Russia election interference probe, the E.P.A. clean power plan repeal and what it means for N.C., Durham parents' continued fight against a potential charter takeover and more.

POLITICS & POLICY

MARK JURKOWITZ: Burr says challenge in Russia probe is sorting 'fact from fiction' (*Outer Banks Sentinel analysis*) -- Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr (R-N.C.) hopes the U.S. will find a way to deter Vladimir Putin's regime from continuing to interfere in political campaigns, he told an Outer Banks civic gathering, adding the findings from his committee's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election may not be ready for several months.

Pence's costly protest (*Winston-Salem Journal*) -- No matter how you feel about NFL players kneeling during the national anthem, the potential costs in terms of career setbacks are on them. But when Vice President Mike Pence made his own protest Sunday in Indianapolis by leaving because of that kneeling, the costs, as much as \$250,000.

SUSAN LADD: Trump administration tilts toward controlling individual liberty (*Greensboro News & Record column*) -- Freedom of religion gives us the right to exercise our beliefs, not the right to impose them on others.

JENNA JOHNSON: Trump's Puerto Rico video tells positive story, leaves misery on cutting-room floor (*Washington Post analysis*) -- The footage of Puerto Rico compiled by the White House in the wake of Hurricane Maria shows the extent to which the Trump administration is portraying the federal

the island's ongoing power, water and health problems.

PETER BAKER: For Trump, the Reality Show Has Never Ended (*New York Times analysis*) -- The president mocks a Republican senator's height, challenges his secretary of state to an I.Q. contest and keeps the audience on the edge of their seats.

Some outrage, please (*Fayetteville Observer*) -- It's a considerable understatement to say this deserves a more robust response than it's gotten so far. On Friday night, someone connected with the Loyal White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan put racist fliers on cars parked at Gray's Creek High School during a football game. The flier said the removal of Confederate flags and monuments is an attack on the white race and America.

ISAAC GROVES: Marines plead guilty to trespassing at Confederate rally (*Burlington Times-News analysis*) -- Two U.S. Marines pleaded guilty to trespassing during the Confederate Memorial Day rally May 20 at the Old Courthouse, ending their Alamance County entanglement, but leaving questions about the conduct of service members. Police say they climbed on top of a building adjacent to the historic courthouse, prior to Alamance County Taking Back Alamance County's Confederate Memorial Day rally and let down a banner that read, "He who controls the past controls the future," a quote from George Orwell's novel "1984," and that also featured an "Identitarian" symbol and the letters "YWNRU" on the side. The acronym stands for "You will not replace us," the slogan chanted by demonstrators carrying torches in Charlottesville, Va. The slogan is an affirmation of being white.

Elections don't make for better judges (*Asheville Citizen-Times*) -- North Carolina's system of selecting trial judges needs to be reformed, but not in the way some legislators want.

WILL MICHAELS: N.C. In 2050: Urbanization, Automation And A New Economy (*WUNC-FM analysis*) -- North Carolina should be ready for more urbanization and a middle class that keeps shrinking in the coming decades. That's according to an analysis from N.C. State University economics professor Michael Walden, who examined how the state might change by the year 2050 if current trends continue.

Republicans abandon conservative principles in public notices vote (*Wilson Times*) -- Businesses whose survival depends on adapting to market conditions are more innovative, more nimble - and thus more effective - than government when it comes to delivering consumer services.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

BRAD PLUMER & NADJA POPOVICH: How Will the Clean Power Plan Repeal Change Carbon Emissions for Your State? (*New York Times analysis*) -- It all depends on where you live. For California, repeal won't make much difference. When the Obama administration unveiled the Clean Power Plan in 2015, each state was given individual goals to slash power sector emissions. The aim was to shift utilities away from coal in favor of cleaner sources like natural gas, wind, solar and nuclear to help address global warming. If the current growth in renewable energy slows unexpectedly, states

Clean Power Plan would have required.

A dirty power plan (*Greensboro News & Record*) -- To President Donald Trump, the Environmental Protection Agency should be a job creator, not a job killer.

JEFF HAMPTON: N.C. alligator plan could allow hunting, offer ways to coexist with reptiles (*Norfolk Virginian-Pilot analysis*) -- A new alligator management plan could include a hunting season and will offer tips on how people can better coexist with a growing population of the reptiles. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission approved the plan developed by the state's Alligator Task Force. The state will hold public hearings on the hunting proposal beginning in January.

MICHELLE WAGNER: What's next after OBX bag ban repeal? (*Outer Banks Sentinel analysis*) -- Now that the controversial repeal of the plastic bag ban on the Outer Banks has officially become law, local officials and organizations are left to consider what, if anything, they can do to mitigate the effects of its reversal.

TIM BUCKLAND: Offshore drilling forum gets political backing (*Wilmington Star-News analysis*) -- Leaders of New Hanover County's Republican and Democratic parties are collectively promoting next week's "To Drill or Not To Drill" event at the Wilson Center. The event, featuring speakers Jean-Michel Cousteau, president of the Ocean Futures Society, and John Hofmeister, a former president of the Shell Oil Company, will be at 7 p.m. Tuesday and hosted by the Cape Fear Realtors. Richard Poole, chairman of the New Hanover County Party Democratic Party, and Pete Divoky, first vice chairman of the county Republican Party, each said they jumped at the chance to promote the event after being asked to by the Realtor group.

With GenX in picture, H2GO plant is more appealing (*Wilmington Star-News*) -- Ripples from GenX have continued to spread, with traces of the chemical compound now found in groundwater near the Chemours plant in Bladen County. We suspect those ripples also will be felt when voters in the Brunswick Regional Water and Sewer district choose three commissioners for the board of what is known as H2GO. The Nov. 7 election could determine whether or not work continues.

ASHITA GONA: Institute to Mark 70 Years of Marine Science (*Coastal Review analysis*) -- The University of North Carolina Institute of Marine Sciences in Morehead City, an off-campus research and education branch of UNC Chapel Hill, is set to celebrate its 70th year.

EDUCATION

CANDACE SWEAT: Durham parents, board members continue fight against charter takeover (*WRAL-TV analysis*) -- A group of teachers, parents and school board members rallied Tuesday night in opposition of the state's possible takeover of Glenn Elementary.

Former McCrory aide to lead online university launched with \$2 million from state (*Winston-Salem Journal analysis*) -- Two years after receiving a \$2

launched its partnership with North Carolina government last week. WGU North Carolina's leader will be Catherine Truitt, who served as Gov. Pat McCrory's education adviser before joining the UNC system's general administration as an associate vice president. McCrory was involved in the 2015 grant.

HEALTH

ROSE HOBAN: NC Universities Tapped to Combat Minority Health

Disparities (*N.C. Health News analysis*) -- NC Central, Duke and UNC all receive dollars to find ways to reduce the disparities in health outcomes for minority communities.

AND MORE

MacArthur Foundation Names Rhiannon Giddens 2017 'Genius' Grant

Winner (*New York Times*) -- The past year has been a whirlwind for Rhiannon Giddens, the Grammy-winning musician who became the first woman and first nonwhite person to win a major prize for excellence on the banjo and then celebrated the release of her latest album, "Freedom Highway," with a performance at the Sing Sing Correctional Facility. But none of it prepared her for what initially seemed like an innocuous call last month from an unfamiliar number in Chicago.

D.G. MARTIN: Wiley Cash's North Carolina history lesson

(*Hickory Record column*) -- Can we trust the people who taught us our state's history when we were growing up? Or do we have to turn to fiction writers to open the doors to a true version of North Carolina's past? Released this month, Wiley Cash's novel, "The Last Ballad," set in 1929's Gaston County's textile mill country, forces us to confront uncomfortable facts about the brutal conditions workers faced on the job and in their struggles to make a life on their meager pay.

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